

Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD)
Performance Progress Report - PDG B-5 Renewal
Quarter 4 2021 – Report Date: January 30, 2022

Activity 1: Statewide Needs Assessment

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Needs Assessment Follow-up

During Q4, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted focus groups with the stakeholders identified for Project A-Data Recommendations and Project B-Family Needs Study. Additionally, AIR developed and disseminated an online Parent Survey to capture the voices of parents who were not able to participate in the Project B-Family Needs Study focus groups. The survey was available in English and Spanish which resulted in a total of 960 respondents (895 English and 65 Spanish speakers)! Also, in an effort to reach a diverse number of participants within the Early Childhood Education and Care System (ECEC), GOECD and AIR disseminated the survey in Arabic, Chinese and Polish. The Family Advisory Committee served as one of the focus groups for the Project B-Family Needs Study. This body was instrumental in assisting AIR with connecting to parents/caregivers within their respective ECEC network. In Q4, AIR conducted 10 stakeholder interviews with a total of 17 participants and 10 focus group interviews with a total of 81 participants. AIR reported a waiting list of 80 participants that did not participate in the Project B-Family Needs Study focus groups.

Risk and Reach Infant/Toddler Pull-out

The [Prenatal to Three Supplement to the Illinois Risk and Reach Report](#) was published on December 14, 2021. The report included data on more than a dozen indicators identified as critical to understanding the state’s prenatal-to-three landscape, including poverty, income assistance, child care subsidy, home visiting, developmental screening, and highly rated licensed child care.

PN3 Policy Roadmap

The Infant and Toddler Child Care Roadmap was submitted to GOECD for review. Five focus groups with child care providers and Child Care Resource and Referrals (CCR&Rs) were completed. Based on the themes, a survey for child care providers and CCR&R staff was disseminated and over 600 responses were received. Five community conversations were held to present findings and gain insight. All data was synthesized into a final report that included recommendations for improving access to infant/toddler care in Illinois.

2. Problems – N/A

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3. Significant findings and events

Risk and Reach Infant/Toddler Pull-out

In the development of the report, the following themes emerged- 1. Obtaining reliable data for children aged 0-2, particularly by race and ethnicity, proved to be a challenge, which limits Illinois’ ability to serve families. 2. This supplement is a pilot endeavor using data collected during unprecedented times. In conjunction with the scarcity of reliable data, the COVID-19 pandemic presented new challenges with understanding the limitations and implications of 2020 data. 3. As Illinois moves forward, efforts to standardize data collection across the early childhood system will need to consider ways to expand the availability of data for infants and toddlers.

Infant/Toddler Policy Roadmap

The need for access to quality infant and toddler child care is significant and has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations for increasing access to infant and toddler child care in Illinois include strengthening the perception of the early childhood field and the workforce, increasing engagement with local communities, improving the Child Care Assistance Program, increasing supports for children with disabilities, early childhood staff and families struggling with mental health and social emotional challenges, as well as, increasing business and operational supports to child care programs.

1. Dissemination activities

Risk and Reach Infant/Toddler Pull-out

The Prenatal to Three Supplement was posted to the Risk and Reach website and was promoted in the December 2021 GOECD newsletter.

4. Dissemination activities – N/A

5. Other activities – N/A

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Needs Assessment Follow-up

In Q1 2022, AIR will finalize the Project A-Data Recommendations and the Project B-Family Needs Study public facing reports and complete dissemination activities. AIR will host two 60-minute public-facing webinar presentations and two (2) 20-minute

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PowerPoint slide deck presentations (one for each project). Additionally, AIR will submit two findings research briefs.

Risk and Reach Infant/Toddler Pull-out

Additional dissemination activities will be planned and implemented in 2022.

Activity 2: Strategic Plan

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

During Q4 the Morten Group provided a presentation to the Early Learning Council on October 4, 2021 and to the GOECD staff on October 5, 2021. At these meetings, Morten Group (MG) surveyed participants about key elements of the strategic planning process, including how to best engage all stakeholder groups. Morten Group also utilized these meetings to begin recruiting members of the Strategic Planning Council (SPC). Members of the Council will work closely with Morten Group on the development of the updated Statewide Strategic Plan.

The first Strategic Planning Council meeting was held on November 16, 2021. The committee consists of twenty (20) representatives from agencies and departments across Illinois' ECEC system, the Illinois Chief Equity Office, as well as external partners. In this inaugural meeting, Morten Group provided an overview of their scope of work and the desired role of the SPC. Council members were asked to provide feedback and insight into additional reports and documents that should be included in the comprehensive data gathering process.

Lastly, Council members were asked to provide feedback on the draft parent survey that MG had under consideration as an additional data gathering tool. Morten Group also participated in a Family Advisory Council (FAC) meeting on December 9, 2021 and discussed the plan to conduct focus groups instead of sending an additional survey. FAC members were also asked to review and provide feedback on the original survey questions. The FAC members provided crucial feedback to help ensure that questions are designed to meet parents and guardians where they are in terms of their personal experience.

A second Strategic Planning Council meeting was held on December 13, 2021. At this meeting, MG shared with the Council that based on information received in a meeting

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with American Institutes of Research (AIR), focus groups will be held instead of using a survey. MG provided an overview of the data review process.

Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative

The Home Visiting Specialist identified 186 families and referred 71 families to home visiting services. Erikson Institute consulted with 94 home visiting agencies across the state of Illinois on the use of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and found that 42 agencies utilized external consultants; 22 agencies had internal consultants; 13 agencies reported not utilizing any consultant; and information on 17 agencies remain unknown. Erikson Institute completed their Annual Report summarizing the progress, findings, challenges, and recommendations for the project.

Analysis of Illinois' State Advisory Councils

Erikson Institute implemented a regular process to review project tasks, assignments, challenges and achievements for numerous Illinois State Advisory Councils. Erikson completed the final draft for the project.

Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council

Erikson Institute implemented a regular process to review project tasks, assignments, challenges and achievements of the Illinois Early Learning Council. They are in the final phases of data analysis. A project update was presented to the Early Learning Council.

Analysis of Illinois' State Funded PD System

Review, analysis, and synthesize of source documents to analyze state and federal funding streams supporting in-service early childhood professionals across Illinois' service systems, and all relevant materials including, but not limited to, existing contracts between state agencies and PD providers, statutory language, rules, regulations, and guidance provided by state and federal agencies was completed in Q4. A final report has been submitted for review.

Early Childhood Transformation Team

Regional and Community Systems Development -The Early Childhood Transformation Team (ECTT) provided onboarding support to the newly hired Director for Regional and Community Systems Development (at Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies), including introductions to the Community Systems Support team at Illinois Action for Children, local community collaborations leaders across the state, and members of the Early Learning Council Subcommittee on Community Systems Development.

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The Early Childhood Transformation Team continues to support the growth and development of the RCSD team at INCCRRA by providing support through the development and circulation of job descriptions and the process of interviewing qualified candidates. The ECTT continues to support the establishment of a regional infrastructure, and the governance and financing of Illinois early childhood system through an equity lens.

Support Integration Projects from Commission

Afton Partners completed a draft of a dynamic funding adequacy model and a structural design of the Geographic Equity and Adequacy Model Support was provided for financial modeling for federal funds, including Child Care Restoration Grant Rounds, workforce bonuses, and Build Back Better grants for child care providers.

Head Start/Early Head Start Cross System Capacity Building

In Q4, the work of this project was completed. Based on data from IECAM (Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map), the Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Illinois Head Start Association, the consultant completed a landscape analysis of early childhood education and care programs that are layering funding streams. The analysis will inform policy development and capacity-building to enable additional programs to attract and layer funding, including Head Start/Early Head Start funding.

2. Problems

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

There has been a slight deviation from the originally planned timeline. Connecting and aligning with other strategic partners such as AIR, who is providing information critical to the development of the strategic plan. Learning when AIR anticipates completion of the Needs Assessment has impacted timing of the planning retreat as well as timing of the development of the plan.

Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative

There are no new presenting challenges from those reported in Q3.

Analysis of Illinois’ State Funded PD System

N/A

Early Childhood Transformation Team

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Regional and Community Systems: the work to 'launch' the regional councils have been more complex than originally estimated because the Early Childhood Transformation Team decided to launch statewide all at once. To address the need, they created five 'Area Coordinators' who are deployed across the state to engage stakeholders on the 'what and why' of a regional infrastructure, and to encourage participation in the launch activities scheduled for the first week of February 2022. The goal continues to be on-track to have all 39 regions up and running by December 2022.

Financing Transformation: the work with state agencies regarding financing mechanism and methodology for equitably funding the early care and education systems is somewhat reliant on the outcome of Build Back Better. The work continues, but the ECTT is also creating options to 'pivot' as needed based on action by Congress in early 2022. Specific needs regarding financing include a long-range approach to Child Care Assistance Program rates, redesign of the Early Childhood Block Grant, and funding adequacy and mechanisms for children in Early Childhood Special Education.

Support Integration Projects from Commission

The largest challenge is data availability for the Geographic Equity and Adequacy Model (GEAM), with particular challenges for Home Visiting data and delays in Child Care Assistance Program data.

Head Start/Early Head Start Cross-System Capacity Building

N/A

3. Significant findings and events

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

Events: Morten Group facilitated two Strategic Planning Council Meetings during Q4.

Findings: Early data collection confirms the importance of ensuring not only the participation of families, but the actual engagement of families in the strategic planning process. This was revealed in the survey results and comments in all strategic planning meetings. An additional theme that surfaced through early data collection was the PDG B-5 Strategic Plan must be equitable. Goals, objectives, and strategies must be written through an equity lens, ensuring that all early childhood learners are provided the right resources, in the right place, and at the right time based on their needs.

Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative

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The project developed curriculum on early childhood development and services for Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Training for Intact workers across the State began on November 4, 2021.

Analysis of Illinois’ State Advisory Councils

The need for consistent definitions of professional development activities and closely aligned processes like monitoring and continuous quality improvement became clear in the analysis process. The final report proposes a guide of definitions. Additionally, the need for a PD system specific goal and vision to be explicitly identified and agreed upon by all stakeholders was indicated. The final report proposes a vision/end state for this PD alignment effort. The extent to which the of complexity of training offerings, funding relationships, and access to trainings for ECE professionals makes it difficult to change the system. The final report proposed a framework to address issues around better alignment of what exists but also improvements to better align with evidence-based practices, and identification of areas missing training content.

Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council

An initial scan of publicly available data informed an understanding of the current restructuring and governance guidelines for the Early Learning Council. In addition, the racial equity activity of the committee has been reviewed.

Early Childhood Transformation Team

N/A

Head Start/Early Head Start Cross-System Capacity Building

The analysis of data from the major funding streams identified problems in at least two areas. First, each funding stream has different criteria for identifying funded organizations, with varying definitions of “grantee,” “program,” “site”, etc., such that a “program” in one data set could be a “grantee” in another or a “site” in another. Second, the data sets do not distinguish whether funding is for classroom based or home based (home visiting) programs. The consultant has recommended that State operated funding streams consider using Head Start categories.

4. Dissemination activities

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

N/A

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Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative

N/A

Analysis of Illinois' State Advisory Councils

Findings will be shared with key stakeholders.

Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council

An initial framework for the final report is completed.

Early Childhood Transformation Team

Dissemination activities have largely happened in the form of PowerPoint presentations to key audiences critical to a successful governance and financing transformation for early childhood, including state agency staff, leadership in the Governor's Office, and more. The Regional and Community Systems team and the ECTT have jointly engaged Kivvit as a communications consulting firm. They have developed a 'brand' for the Regional Councils – now named Birth to Five Action Councils – and are working with both teams on content development, website design, and outreach strategies. Each team will also engage a Communication Manager early in 2022 to embed a strategic communications and outreach strategy for all audiences.

Support Integration Projects from Commission

To date, work remains internal. Sharing has occurred in meetings with State ECE leadership.

Head Start/Early Head Start Cross-System Capacity Building

N/A

Analysis of Illinois' State Funded PD System

A final report has been submitted for review.

5. Other activities

Early Childhood Transformation Team

The ECTT has engaged agency staff in a variety of conversations and 'work sessions.' Specifically, ECTT conducted a day-long cross-agency meeting to explore possible avenues and implications of transforming Illinois' ECEC system. They hosted a meeting with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to review the Early Childhood Funding

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Commission recommendations and the implications short- and long-term on the ISBE ECBG programs and funding.

ECTT also engaged data partners in a ½ day 'Data Summit' to discuss opportunities and needs in a more integrated ECEC system, and partnered with the IDHS Division of Early Childhood to explore what 'cross-agency' coordination for comprehensive early childhood systems needs to include in order to improve experiences for families, children and providers.

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Illinois PDG B-5 Strategic Plan

During the Q1 2022, Morten Group will host a third Strategic Planning Council meeting and facilitate a Strategic Planning Retreat to initiate the development of the Strategic Plan document.

Home Visiting/Child Welfare Initiative

The project team will continue to make and monitor referrals to home visiting programs; facilitate cross-training of child welfare and home visiting providers; and refine data sharing policy and procedures. Intact workers across the State will continue to engage in the statewide Families First training, including a focus on home visiting services.

Analysis of Illinois' State Advisory Councils

This project has been completed. Identification of key informants/introduction for interviews will occur. Analysis and findings will be documented for the final report.

Analysis & Consultation for the Early Learning Council

Erikson team will follow-up on the findings in the study.

Analysis of Illinois' State Funded PD System

This project has been completed.

Early Childhood Transformation Team

In Q1 2022, the ECTT will complete the following deliverables- 1. Officially launch the Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grants program in partnership with IDHS and INCCRRA 2. Continue to provide strategic input and support regarding continued investment and monitoring of COVID-19 relief funds 3. Continue with Afton Partners work on the Geographic Equity & Adequacy Map; 4. Redesign the overall funding

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system and build on the ECEC Funding Commission recommendations 5. Design a long-range approach to increasing Child Care Assistance Program rates for quality and redesigning the Early Childhood Block Grant (ISBE)-Needs to be designed based on BBB if the federal legislation passes 6. Prepare report for Governor detailing opportunities and challenges for potential new governance structures.

Support Integration Projects from Funding Commission

Afton Partners prepared options for the Funding Design; completed the enhanced Funding Adequacy Model; completed the Federal Legislation Funding Adequacy Model; d geographic equity and adequacy outcomes and mapping visualizations; and prepared a Geographic Equity and Adequacy Model (GEAM) findings and recommendations report.

Head Start/Early Head Start Cross-System Capacity Building

This project has been completed.

Activity 3: Maximizing Parent & Family Knowledge, Choice, & Engagement

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

The Family Advisory Committee (FAC) parent leaders held two FAC/ELC meetings during Quarter 4. The co-chair reviewed the efforts and results of the statewide system scan conducted by the FAC parent leaders.

Dr. Eboni Howard and Dr. Patricia Garcia-Arena from American Institutes for Research (AIR) provided a presentation about the IL Statewide Needs Assessment-*Project B: Family Needs Study*. Dr. Howard and Dr. Garcia-Arena shared AIR's charge to design and conduct a qualitative study to hear and better understand from families of children prenatal-3 and 3-5 years how they engage with the ECEC system, what their needs are, and how the ECEC system might better address their concerns. They plan to utilize focus groups with parents and interviews with key stakeholders to gather this information. Additionally, they shared their outreach/recruitment plan to collect this information and a timeline for project dissemination and completion.

Findings from the Parent Insight Report (from INCCRRA), which highlighted the barriers and successes of engaging in ECEC services and determined strategies for how to communicate with families more effectively was shared. In addition, an update on the State's Enrollment Campaign was provided and the FAC engaged in discussion to determine next steps.

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Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) welcomed Gabriella Rivero, who will serve as the Spanish Interpreter and offer interpretation services during the FAC/ELC meetings.

On November 18, 2021, the Family Advisory Committee of The Early Learning Council celebrated their one-year anniversary of service! In honor of this great milestone, a full celebratory program was held virtually. Governor Pritzker provided a video recording acknowledging the parents' efforts and congratulating them.

During the FAC/ELC meeting, which was held on December 9, 2021, Dr. Eboni Howard (AIR) shared a draft of the data they've collected from parents. At that time, AIR received 750 responses from the Needs Assessment Parent Survey and 150 parents participated in the focus groups. There were 75 additional parents waiting to join the focus groups.

There was a presentation of the restructuring of the ELC (Early Learning Council) and the FAC had a robust discussion on the need for there to be full parent representation on all ELC committees moving forward- also discussed the need for parents to be present and active on the committees.

Parent Cafés

In Q4, the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) focused its efforts on coaching and supporting nine ECE/Head Start/Early Head Start programs within the current cohort group. Technical assistance was provided monthly to each of the nine programs. A total of 39 Parent Cafés was offered during this quarter. The estimated total of parents participating in a Café was 209. Additionally, IHSA supported an eight-hour training for 29 Parent Leaders who now have the skills and knowledge to facilitate and lead Parent Cafés in 2022. A child care stipend was provided.

PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support

During Q4, Raising Illinois released applications for their Family Leader Program, a priority initiative to incorporate family voices, particularly, families of color and those from under-served communities, in setting priorities, making decisions and guiding the program's actions to ensure early learning and care systems work for all families. Raising Illinois selected a racially, geographically and economically diverse group of 12 parents from their pool of candidates.

Raising Illinois officially kicked-off by hosting an orientation meeting in December 2021. As a result of the program's new brand guidelines, new name and updated key messaging, they refreshed their coalition fact sheet and presentation deck to align with

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their latest standards. In addition, the program prioritized the translation of these materials, as well as the full Prenatal to Three agenda.

In partnership with the program's communications consultant GMMB, Raising Illinois developed a formal collection of their Fiscal Year 2021 accomplishments that could be referenced by coalition members and external audiences. This document demonstrates the progress made during the last fiscal year in each priority area of the Illinois Prenatal-to-Three agenda. Now that the document is complete, the program will work to integrate updates throughout their Raising Illinois website to help provide visitors with the latest status of each objective within their agenda.

In addition, Raising Illinois completed the first phase of a Fiscal Year 2022 priorities document, which outlines specific action items within each policy area of their agenda during the current fiscal year. To date, the program has shared the document with their Lead Facilitating Organizations to ensure accurate framing and coverage. In the new calendar year, the program will – together with GMMB – use the current document's content to create a more digestible brochure of this year's priorities for external audiences. The program's goal for this final document is to drive awareness of relevant work of Raising Illinois and engagement of new individuals, current members and state leaders.

The program also completed a preliminary draft of the Infant & Toddler Child Care Roadmap, which is an objective within the Raising Illinois agenda. Through a robust literature review, scan of other state strategies and thoughtful engagement of providers and communities, the Roadmap explores ways Illinois can better meet the needs of families through the lens of the State's child care community. Although the draft is complete and has been shared with the Governor's Office, additionally, the program plans to have the draft document designed in a way that amplifies its powerful content and build out a strong communications plan for the final document that will launch in Q1 2022.

2. Problems

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

One of the FAC parent leaders shared a personal family matter and the parent didn't know how to access support services for herself and her family. The FAC Co-Chair, was able to connect the parent to free counseling services for herself and her family. The parent reported that she and her children are actively utilizing the counseling services

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and she has found it to be very beneficial. Due to the crisis/concerns expressed by some of the FAC leaders, the need for accessible (statewide level) social-emotional and mental health services for the FAC parent leaders.

Parent Cafés

Workforce issues are impacting the implementation of Parent Cafés. All nine programs are under-staffed and report the staff that are currently in place are managing multiple roles. Many of the programs have not been able to open classrooms because they cannot find staff who meet the qualifications. Also, COVID-19 outbreaks continue to wreak havoc on program operations and create challenges for an already fractured workforce. Both the workforce shortages and COVID outbreaks have impacted Parent Cafés.

PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support

Plans for a public launch event in the fall were ultimately delayed for several reasons, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and staffing changes within in the executive branch and across the field. As the program neared the end of year, they worked with their communication consultant GMMB to determine the best path forward. In an effort to offer equitable opportunities for participation, Raising Illinois will instead host a virtual, pre-recorded stakeholder engagement event during Spring 2022, in which they will highlight their progress to-date and outline engagement opportunities in the short- and long-term. Most early childhood organizations across the state planned for winter efforts focused on the passage of the federal Build Back Better package. Unfortunately, the package did not make it past the House before the new year as many expected, putting planned communications on hold for the foreseeable future. As a result, the program had to refresh their editorial calendar and plan for different communication objectives through the end of the year. The program expects to reinvigorate their editorial calendar in 2022.

3. Significant findings and events

Parent Cafés

Several of the nine programs were able to offer an in-person Café. These programs noticed a difference in attendance and engagement for in-person Cafés versus the virtual Cafés they sponsored. IHSA is anxious to resume offering Cafés in-person as in-person sessions seem to be more powerful. Building the capacity of local communities to sponsor Cafés are important to recovery or engaging families post pandemic.

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PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support

During Q4, the Raising Illinois website garnered the following traffic-1,263 unique visitors – with a total of 1,719 sessions on the site, the home page was visited the most (1,041 times), closely followed by the “Family Leader Program” main page and the “Get Involved” page, the site has been visited by individuals across 34 states. As expected, most visitors are in Illinois, followed by Virginia (143 unique users) and Texas (54 unique users), in Illinois, the program has seen web traffic from individuals across the state, with the most visits from individuals in the Chicagoland (542 sessions), Springfield (24 sessions), Peoria (19 sessions) and Oak Park (18 sessions) areas, the program also received get involved/email sign-up responses from 29 new individuals.

As mentioned previously, Raising Illinois welcomed 12 parents into their inaugural 2022 Family Leader Program. This diverse cohort of individuals includes- five parents from Chicago; three from the surrounding suburbs; four from downstate Illinois; five African American parents; five Latina parents; two White parents and six of the leaders have children 0-5 years old; four leaders have children 0-3 years old.

In mid-December, Raising Illinois hosted their first-ever, formal meeting with their Lead Facilitating Organizations, in which they covered work that had been completed to-date and their plans for the new year. At its maximum, the program had 26 individuals join the call, many of whom shared feedback and insight along the way. In the new year, the program hopes to reconvene this group quarterly to help drive collaboration and ensure comprehensive team input on the work happening across the backbone team.

4. Dissemination activities

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

N/A

Parent Cafés

IHSA developed new training materials for the twenty-nine Parent Leaders. Training materials, such as the agenda, PowerPoint, Guidebook, Toolkit, and all supporting materials were disseminated. The IHSA Parent Café Portal also stores these materials for easy access.

PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support

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In Q4, Raising Illinois disseminated applications for their inaugural set of participants enrolled in the Family Leader Program. To ensure equitable access and opportunity to applications, the program made information about the program and applications available in both English and Spanish, as well as digitally and via print. All information was posted on the Raising Illinois website and uploaded in PDF format – all of which was sent to Raising Illinois coalition members through the program's internal collaboration tool Basecamp and to their email list of 350+ individuals.

Raising Illinois continued active use of their internal collaboration platform, Basecamp, in which all contributing coalition members and the backbone team members can follow the external work of members, brainstorm, invite others to relevant events and provide feedback on policy work group action items.

5. Other activities

Parent Cafés

An evaluation report is currently being written and will be disseminated when completed. The overall evaluation report captures individual parent and Parent Leader feedback and informs both local and state system development. Below is a quote from a parent who attended a Parent Café.

"I liked that it was an open and safe space. It was refreshing to know that parents experience the same challenges I do. It helped me to understand that my experiences are not isolated. While I am shy and didn't share much, the information shared will help me in my parenting journey. As I become more familiar it's great to know that I have other parents and a platform to share with."

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Early Learning Council Family Advisory Committee (FAC)

The planned activities for Q1 2022 include: begin the third and final rotation of COFI training (Phase 3); develop a proposal for the Early Learning Council to provide 1:1 mentoring to the FAC members.

Parent Cafés

The planned activities for Q1 2022 are to establish a new cohort group and provide ongoing support for previous cohort groups, mentor the twenty-nine newly trained Parent Leaders, develop a tool or guide for individual programs to create their own

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Parent Café topics and continue the model into the future. The tool will support how to develop questions that drive responsive feedback from parents.

PN3 Public Communication & Engagement Support

The planned activities for Q1 2022 are as follows- develop a Build Back Better Package, design a Priority brochure that can be customized for specific external audiences; finalize the Child Care Roadmap document; host a public stakeholder engagement event and initiate the development of a robust and interactive storytelling section of the Raising Illinois website.

Activity 4: Sharing Best Practices & Professional Development for the Workforce

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)

In Q4, part three of the Supervisor FAN Cohort was held on December 13, 2021. The curriculum included reviewing the concepts of the FAN, mismatch/repair, how the FAN can support difficult conversations and performance improvement, the FAN for team meetings/ groups, and sustaining the FAN in practice. FAN Trainer Candidates facilitated two, 3-hour virtual sessions of FAN Training held December 22, 2021, with FAN Master Trainer's support, observation, and feedback. Trainer Candidates will facilitate their second cohort of FAN Training with support and observation from a FAN Master Trainer beginning in January 2022. Thirteen home visitors and one supervisor completed the FAN Training. Communities for practice for supervisors and practitioners continue.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

In Q4, implementation site programs were provided the following trainings: Inclusion Series #1: Routines (October 8, 2021), Practice Based Coaching (October 12, 2021 and October 13, 2021), Positive Solutions for Families (October 28, 2021), Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children; PTR-YC (November 4, 2021), Practice Based Coaching Equity Guide (December 7, 2021), and Inclusion Series #2: Individualized Supports (December 10, 2021). The Process Coaches embedded in the CCR&Rs continue to be supported in this new role through trainings, monthly check-in meetings, and additional one-on-one support from a Process Coach.

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Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches

In Q4, local delivery of Pyramid Model trainings continues to be submitted and scheduled through Gateways; registry-approved trainings and professional development trainings offered by PMC are entered into the Gateways system for ongoing tracking. INCCRRA continued to support five center-based child care programs and their continued participation in the Child Care Pyramid Model Child Care Implementation Pilot. The family child care programs, in partnership with two Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, completed Participation Forms to participate in the pilot. Data collected from the identified child care programs and family child care programs, support the findings in the 2021 evaluation report "ILLINOIS PYRAMID MODEL EFFORTS TO SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS." This report is currently under review.

Inclusion Professional Development System

During Q4, intensive professional learning and technical assistance with 3 QRIS Pilot child care programs continued. The fall season continued to pose additional barriers to connecting with the sites due to COVID-19 and illnesses. For this reason, Early CHOICES shifted to a Community of Practice (COP) Model. Work with 3 CITs in Mannheim, Collinsville, and Springfield continues with monthly meetings. In Q4 Practice-Based Coaching training was completed and coaching from onsite coaches will begin in January 2022. Early CHOICES cross walked the Inclusive Classroom Profile with the Early Care and Education Environments Indicators to streamline the process for Illinois programs who are familiar with Inclusive Classroom Profile so the programs can use the familiar tool but also align to the indicators.

Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement

The final report, *A Descriptive Profile of Illinois' Home Visiting Workforce*, was completed in Q3 and provides aligned and accurate data on the home visiting workforce registry.

Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization

Route 3 Films was contracted by The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) to film and create video clips needed to enhance and strengthen statewide early childhood competency-based curriculum modules. INCCRRA staff asked faculty, state and national consultants who are involved in both the ECE and Infant Toddler Modularization projects to identify subject matter for videos needed for curriculum development. The following areas were prioritized in creating videos as requested by state and national consultants and faculty: playground and classroom safety, parent- teacher interactions, drop off exchanges, story time sessions, and a one-

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hour “whole classroom” video. The filming took place in November 2021 and December 2021 at the Lincoln Land Child Development Center in Springfield and PALS Center in Moline.

Gateways: Linkage Project

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) previously engaged IDHS representatives and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) representatives to discuss data linkages and sharing. A meeting date is pending.

Gateways: Credential Fees

Significant numbers of the early childhood workforce in Illinois have submitted Gateways Credential applications due to the credential fee waiver. There were 1,666 credential applications received. From these applications, 753 credentials were awarded to 586 distinct individuals. (Some applicants qualify for more than one credential). The funding to support 3,750 credential fee waivers is now fully depleted which means 100% of the 3,750 credential application fee waivers expected to be allocated in 2021 have been expended.

Gateways: Education Reimbursement

The Education Reimbursement project received 80 applications during this period. The funds have been obligated to eligible providers who have outstanding student debt and reimbursement has been made to those accredited Illinois colleges and universities.

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) disbursed the remainder of Calendar Year 2021 funds, fully expending the Year 2 monies. During this same period, IBHE completed an analysis of the second cohort of participants in the project.

Summary demographic information will follow in a separate document, but highlights are as follows: There are 135 participants in the EC4 cohort project (2021-2022) as of this report. Of these, 60.7% are White and 39.3% are persons of color-18.5% identify as African American; 17% identify as LatinX; 66.6% are 18-39 years of age; 33.3% are 40 years of age and older.

IBHE also worked with grantees to survey cohort participants in Fall 2021 about the factors that influenced their decision to participate and features of the cohort program that have been helpful to them as working adults. A summary of the Fall 2021 EC4 participant survey will be compiled and provided separately.

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Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules

Each of the five partnering institutions involved in the Infant-Toddler Credential module project developed a plan for piloting these modules in 2022 along with a corresponding budget. Additionally, ancillary partnering institutions (National Louis University, Northern Illinois University and Heartland Community College) who provided mentoring and coaching, as well as development of scope and sequence, also developed plans for piloting along with a corresponding budget.

Gateways Scholarship Program

All funding for this project has been allocated to eligible recipients. A written report will be shared with The Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD).

ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program

During this period, students engaged in the curricular ECE competency-based modules. Student accounts were billed accordingly, and grant monies were drawn down to pay for the coursework as specified by this grant. Any students that received "In-Progress" or "I" grades for summer term(s) completed their outstanding work and grades were submitted.

Family Specialist Credential Modules

Elgin Community College, Heartland Community College, and Erikson Institute were each successfully entitled for the Gateways Family Specialist Credential. Additionally: Rasmussen University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign entitlement applications were reviewed by the Entitled Review Group (ERG). Pending some additional information requested, it is anticipated they will become entitled/approved. Note: A 6th institution, Chicago State University, is also working on an application.

ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway

National consultants finalized 23 unique competency-based curriculum modules for the newly created bridge of competencies that will provide a pathway for the early childhood workforce to move from attainment of the Gateways ECE Credential Level 5 to gain a Professional Educator License (PEL). Faculty met to review and come to consensus on a set of recommendations that will be included in the final report. These recommendations will be shared with GOECD, ISBE and IDHS for review and implementation. The goal of the recommendations is to mitigate barriers experienced by the early childhood workforce in gaining professional teaching licenses and to

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provide supports needed to operationalize the bridge supporting workforce movement from a Gateways Credential to a license.

Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning

Workshop sessions were held in which content area scenarios played out in real time so both employers and faculty could provide feedback to inform any needed revisions. Attendees at these workshop sessions were able to interact with the Mursion simulation specialist from the Competency Based Education Network (C-BEN).

Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families

In Q4, Diversity-Informed Tenets Workshops occurred with eleven attendees. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Planning Group, led by Dr. Eva Shivers from the Indigo Cultural Center, met through December 2021. Dr. Shivers provided technical assistance and collaborated with the work group to develop a workplan with recommendations for Reflective Groups/Communities of Practice. A draft with recommendations for the implementation was submitted.

2. Problems

Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)

N/A

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

N/A

Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches

Submission of trainings outside the local Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies for local training delivery of Pyramid Model training modules continues to be inconsistent. There continues to be no on-site training and coaching due to COVID-19 mitigation strategies.

Inclusion Professional Development System

Lack of response/ participation from one child care agency has resulted in the program no longer offering the agency support in 2022. In general, there seems to be increased issues with site visits due to a spike in COVID-19 cases, leading back to virtual meetings where possible. Hybrid meetings with most people in person and others virtual is a technical challenge that prevents participation from all parties.

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Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement

There was a delay in finalizing the report; the project was completed in September.

Gateways: Linkage Project

Due to different state agency rules and protocols, the data sharing conversations are moving slowly.

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion

Four grantees underspent Year 1 funds. These monies were returned to the Illinois State Board of Education in Q4. The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has heightened the capacity to monitor this aspect of the work going forward.

Family Specialist Credential Modules

N/A

Gateways: Credential Fees

N/A

Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules

N/A

Gateways: Education Reimbursement

N/A

Gateway Scholarship

N/A

Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization

N/A

ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program

The ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program began with 54 students and 6 students dropped over the first two terms. Reported reasons for attrition were to pursue the traditional program (the fast pace wasn’t advantageous for two students), taking time off due to severe illness (two students are intending to join the traditional program in a future term), loss of a loved one (one student dropped out without committing to rejoining the traditional program), and failing courses without continued

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communication. It has been found necessary to issue more “In-Progress” (I-grades) grades than the traditional classes due to the accelerated nature of the program and/or rigor of the modules. After the first few courses and experiences with I-grades, the programming was revised to include timelines and firmer due dates. This has resulted in much more success (92%) of students completing on time and not needing I-grades.

Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families

There was difficulty filing registration for the November 2021 Diversity-Informed Tenets Workshops.

3. Significant findings and events

Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)

A summary of feedback for the Supervisor FAN cohort part three was positive, with participants expressing the training increased their understanding about the “Language of Repair” and how it can help move staff in a better direction to repair past experiences and continues to build their capacity in reflective supervision. They continue to express how helpful it is to learn from and share with their colleagues.

A summary of feedback for the Train the Trainer Cohort One part 3 for Head Start/Early Head Start practitioners was positive, with participants expressing they will incorporate many lessons into their practice. One area highlighted by most was to focus on being attuned with families and “meet them where they are”.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

The PDG B5 ExceleRate pilot program representatives were asked why they continue to participate in the PDG B5 ExceleRate pilot, and directors provided positive feedback of Pyramid Model. Direct quotes included:

“We have resources [Pyramid Model] that we would not have access to without the pilot”; and “My staff are learning how to work with challenging behaviors, which they have always requested training on. They want to help children be their best selves as well as to be able to correctly model the behaviors they expect. It's a lot of work and gets overwhelming for everyone especially when we are short-staffed, but still worth what we get from it in the end”.

Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches

Much is being learned about Pyramid Model Implementation in child care in Illinois including types of support available, needed supports to implement, scale-up and sustain Pyramid Model in child care and family child care.

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Inclusion Professional Development System

The response of the Community of Practice has been positive. There was one event this quarter with 56 participants. The CITs have completed their baseline assessments and created action plans for the work. They have identified implementation sites and coaches. Three communities have increased inclusive opportunities with the start of the new school year and are working on implementing practices and staying true to their vision of inclusion.

Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement

The report identifies 1,019 individuals in Illinois who meet the intended definition of home visitor and supervisor. Of this group, 51.8% utilize Parents as Teachers, 19.8% use Baby TALK, 17.2% Healthy Families America, 9.8% Early Head Start Home-Based, and 1.4% use the Nurse Family Partnership home visiting model. In terms of racial demographics, 46.8% identified as Caucasian/White, 30.5% as Hispanic/Latinx, 20.4% as African American/Black, 0.9% as Asian, 0.9% as Multi-Racial, and 0.5% as other.

Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization

N/A

Family Specialist Credential Modules

N/A

Gateways: Credential Fees

Applications for credentials from the field surpassed 4,200 during this quarter. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) began using the additional (underspent funds) which were also allocated for credential fee waivers and renewals. GOECD's support to the field through the provision of fee waivers validates the \$65 credential application fee continues to be a significant barrier to the (underpaid) early care and education workforce.

Gateways: Education Reimbursements

Previously funded applicants that are still gaining debt at accredited Illinois Higher Education Institutions seem to be a more responsive group than the new applicants. These applicants are still pursuing coursework and show this support is needed to help them continue their educational goals.

Gateways Scholarship

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In 2021, GOECD invested \$75,000 in supplemental funds through the PDG B5grant in this program. These funds were specifically designated to reach individuals in the early childhood workforce pursuing coursework leading to a Professional Educator Licensure (PEL) with Early Childhood endorsement, at 4- year accredited institutions in Illinois. At the conclusion of this project, 24 recipients had an average of \$3,125 paid on their behalf to an accredited higher education institution.

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohort (EC4) Expansion

The Illinois Board of Higher Education will provide a full summary of demographic information for individuals who participated in the cohorts. A brief summary is included here-There were 135 participants in the EC4 cohort project (2021-2022).

Of these, 60.7% are White and 39.3% are persons of color. 18.5% identify as African American; 17% identify as LatinX; 66.6% are 18-39 years of age; 33.3% are 40 years of age and older

Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules

During Q4, faculty met regularly (weekly or bi-monthly) along with the state consultants, national consultants and mentors to review and strengthen drafts of the curriculum modules. The team also reviewed the feedback from the review rounds of each of the content areas.

The leadership team consisting of The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) staff, state and national consultants, and mentors met monthly to review the work and to ensure the project continues to meet grant deliverables and the timeline. At the end of Q4 these monthly meetings incorporated planning for the pilot phase of the project.

ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program

The 48 continuing students have all been successful, passing their classes. National Louis University (NLU) had an average of 64% attendance at weekly synchronous “Competency Coffee Shops”. NLU has also reported, with added timelines and due dates, fewer students need more time to complete their work. Lastly, feedback from students revealed they appreciate the opportunity to engage in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), allowing them time to focus in more detail on those competencies they are still working to master.

ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway

The taskforce identified nine recommendations to ISBE related to the creation of a bridge from the Gateways ECE Credential Level 5 toward a Professional Educator

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License. These recommendations will impact both the Illinois State Board of Education Administrative Rule and licensure testing requirements.

Two additional recommendations will be made to IDHS regarding the implementation of Gateways to Opportunity® through INCCRRA and will support operationalizing of this newly designed Bridge Pathway.

Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning

During this reporting period, the scenario writing and the testing of the scenarios with a simulation expert from Mursion Software and employer partners were completed.

Assessor trainings were held in December 2021 and will build capacity to launch the project in 2022. A call inviting higher education institutions across the State to be part of the soft launch of the next phase of the PLA project was shared with all Illinois institutions.

4. Dissemination activities

Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)

N/A

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

The Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) disseminated an [infographic](#) on implementation of the Pyramid Model in Illinois. The document is on the GOECD website and was shared widely. PMC continued to disseminate the model to programs throughout the State via the ePyramid modules.

Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches

Formative data was shared in Q4 including summaries of feedback from PD events and from Process Coach logs. Ongoing dissemination of data collected throughout 2021 will occur through the development of more infographics or 1–3-page briefs that are targeted at both broad and more targeted audiences.

Inclusion Professional Development System

Community Inclusion Team public awareness materials are continually shared. The Community of Practice is an additional avenue for sharing new information and resources with team members and with the programs each member serves.

Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement

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The report was distributed and presented to the Illinois Early Learning Council's Home Visiting Task Force Committee on September 23, 2021 and is hosted as a final deliverable on the PDG B-5 page on the GOECD website.

Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization

Videos will be loaded into the appropriate modules and made available to higher education faculty for their use in classroom instruction.

ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway

A "statewide showcase" was held December 16, 2021. Led by state and national consultants, all Illinois four-year early childhood higher education institution faculty and state agencies were invited and encouraged to attend this virtual meeting. A project synopsis was shared, and outcomes of the project were highlighted. Attendance from faculty and state agency representatives was excellent and feedback was positive.

Family Specialist Credential Modules

N/A

Gateways: Credential Fees

The Gateways website was used to publicly announce the \$65 Gateways Credential application fee waiver. The online payment system was also disabled for those applying for credentials to ensure payments were not inadvertently submitted with credential applications. The credential fee waiver announcement was shared statewide through social media and a variety of newsletters to reach as many members of the workforce as possible.

Gateways: Education Reimbursements

On November 11, 2021, a video overview of the reimbursement program was published on the Gateways YouTube page and was also embedded at the top of the reimbursement program section of the Gateways website. On November 30, 2021, all funds had been obligated. The reimbursement program application was removed from the Gateways website, and a message regarding obligated funds was put in its place.

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is nearing completion on a Year 1 summative report. This document, along with a Year 2021-2022 summary of cohort demographics and a fall 2021 survey of participants will be shared with GOECD.

Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules

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When the report is finalized, it will be shared statewide with GOECD, state agencies, and placed on the Gateways Website. Copies will be provided to higher education institutions that participated in the ITC modularization project.

Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning

An invitation was sent to all ECE entitled higher education provosts, vice-presidents, deans and faculty inviting them to the December 7, 2021, showcase of the Prior Learning Assessment project. Following the PLA Showcase an email was sent to the Gateways Higher Education Listserv asking those institutions that are interested in using the scenarios and assessments and who have mechanisms in place to award college credit for prior learning assessments to contact INCCRRA about participating in the initial launch of the Prior Learning Assessment statewide project planned for early 2022.

Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families

Training and registration information on the Diversity-Informed Tenets workshops was sent to the targeted audiences for the November 2021 training dates.

5. Other activities

Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)

While the PDG B-5 grant does not explicitly fund Erikson Institute's Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, this project will continue to be informed and improved by Erikson's FAN Team DEI initiatives.

Inclusion Professional Development System

Early CHOICES invited Community of Practice (CoP) members and others to join their professional development events hosted outside of PDG B-5 specific work.

Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement

The report continues to be distributed to different groups and avenues.

Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches

Materials and support continue to be developed in Spanish to support Spanish-speaking teachers, coaches, children, and families.

Gateways: Education Reimbursement

N/A

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ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway

When the report is finalized, it will be shared statewide with GOECD, state agencies, and placed on the Gateways Website. Copies will be provided to higher education institutions that participated in this project.

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) received documentation from the Illinois State Board of Education in late December 2021, extending their agreement.

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Facilitating Attuned Interactions Training (FAN)

In Q1 2022, the cohort of Supervisor FAN training (Supervisor/Practitioner) will continue for the twenty supervisors; a Train-the-Trainer for Practitioner FAN will continue to expand Head Start's capacity to provide FAN training to front-line staff of programs after the grant (trainer team of two); and Community of Practice Meetings targeting Head Start/Early Head Start Programs will continue. Additionally, work will begin to adapt the FAN materials for center-based programs.

Pyramid Model Implementation & Professional Development

In Q1 2022, Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) will: continue dissemination of eModule codes, continue virtual live training events, continue monthly Process Coach calls for child care sites, and continue Process Coach support for CCR&R agencies.

Gateways Registry: Pyramid Model Trainers & Coaches

In Q1 2022, INCCRRA will: maintain the database of Registry-Approved Pyramid Model trainings; continue support and administration of Relationship Based Professional Development within child care programs; continue evaluation data analysis and reporting; and continue evaluation of Pyramid Model Implementation Sites and Pyramid Model Consortium professional development events.

Inclusion Professional Development System

In Q1 2022, Early CHOICES will: continue Community of Practice (CoP) meetings; continue monthly meetings with ExceleRate Pilot sites; set up a training/meeting for three pilot child care centers to meet to learn about MOUs and referral expectations; and support Practiced Based Coaching Training for three communities.

Gateways Registry: Home Visiting Enhancement

The project is complete, and the final report was submitted in Q4.

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Competency-Based Education (CBE) Modularization

N/A

Gateways: Linkage Project

In Q1 2022, INCCRRA will continue to explore options to increase the number of school-based Preschool for All professionals (teachers and paraprofessionals) in the Gateways Registry.

Gateways: Credential Fees

Monies in Year 3 will continue the support of the waived credential fees for the early care and education workforce in Illinois. A comprehensive report will be submitted to GOECD regarding Year 2 credential fees.

Gateways: Education Reimbursements

N/A

Early Childhood Credential Completion Cohorts (EC4) Expansion

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) will continue to work with grantees during Year 3 of implementation.

Gateways: Infant/Toddler Credential Modules

"Lessons learned" from the ECE Credential Competency pilot, which is now concluding, are being captured and will be used to inform the launch of the pilot for the Infant Toddler Credential Competency work planned for 2022.

Gateways Scholarship Program

N/A

ECE Competency-Based B.A. Program

N/A

Family Specialist Credential Modules

N/A

ECE Level 5 to PEL Pathway

N/A

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Prior Learning Assessment Articulation/Transfer Planning

N/A

Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families

In Q1 2022, INCCRRA will: subcontract for 3 two-hour virtual training deliveries (each training to be delivered twice); Implement two Professional Learning Groups; Training Delivery of two-day Diversity-Informed Workshops; and provide ongoing logistics, and technology supports and data tracking of professional development events.

Activity 5: Improving Quality/Service Integration, Expanding Access

1. Major activities and accomplishments

ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

During Q4 the 35 participating child care centers continued to test the revised funding model, resulting in improvements to the process for submitting monthly billings to further ensure the sustainability and scalability of the model. The centers are utilizing support from the McCormick Center and Plan-Do-Review meetings to engage in Continuous Quality Improvements (CQI), and, as a result are reporting enhanced teacher engagement throughout their programs.

ExceleRate Family Child Care Pilot

In Q4, the three participating Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies began executing the support plans they developed with four peer-led family child care associations. Activities included virtual meetings held as first steps to Communities of Practice, training of association leaders as quality mentors, reflecting with leaders on their own leadership development pathways, and support for associations' recruitment of new members. Planning took place to deepen and expand the work in grant Year 3. Results will inform the revision of QRIS standards for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

ExceleRate Pilot: Online Payroll Reporting System

During Q4, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) began creating a database for the electronic submission of monthly billings according to the plan developed in the Q3.

Community Planning for Expansion

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During Q4, the Elgin community planning group (the initial “test” community) completed its plan to attract and administer expanded public funding for ECCE. The remaining four communities in Cohort 1 continued with the facilitated planning process. Cohort 2 communities participated in workshops on data, family engagement, program models, and racial equity. East Aurora, which had suspended its work in cohort one, has re-started and will receive Year 3 support for examining community data.

2. Problems

ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

During Q4, the child care centers have seen an increase in COVID-19 cases and experienced additional quarantines impacting their progress with project reporting. Most centers have been able to keep pace with project activities but have fallen behind meeting reporting deadlines.

ExceleRate Pilot: Online Payroll Reporting System

During Q4, INCCRRA experienced competing priorities impacting their database completion timeline. As such, the database testing will begin in Q1 of Year 3 and is expected to be fully operational by the end of Q2.

ExceleRate Family Child Care Pilot

Family child care association activities continued to be reduced because of COVID-19, but the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies supported them to hold virtual meetings.

Community Planning for Expansion

N/A

3. Significant findings and events

ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

The funding model is sustainable and scalable. In addition, centers report that the technical assistance (TA) provided by GOECD and the McCormick Center has significantly improved their ability to engage in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) practices.

ExceleRate Family Child Care Pilot

The peer-led family child care associations in which the CCR&R supports has helped to establish closer ties and build capacity.

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4. Dissemination activities

ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

GOECD continues to meet with the State's Early Childhood Transformation Team to inform salary schedule development based on pilot project findings. The pilot project was featured in Simon Workman's article *Promoting Equitable Access to Quality Child Care* <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/promoting-equitable-access-to-quality-child-care/>. GOECD met with the Afton Partners to inform creation of the Growth Grants Provider Tool for developing salary budgets. GOECD and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) meet monthly, to prepare to transition the funding support from PDG B-5 to IDHS.

Community Planning for Expansion

N/A

5. Other activities – N/A

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

ExceleRate Tiered QRIS/Tiered Funding Pilot

In Q1 2022, GOECD will focus on sustainability, scalability and evaluation. IDHS discussions continue to sustain salary funding beyond PDG B-5. INCCRRA continues database development in preparation for funding transition to IDHS. The McCormick Center is working on job-embedded professional development opportunities to encourage Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) activities.

ExceleRate Family Child Care Pilot

In Q1 2022, the planning and activities that began with association leaders will be expanded more broadly to their general membership. Also, CCR&R agencies in three additional service delivery areas will engage new associations in the work.

ExceleRate Pilot: Online Payroll Reporting System

In Q1 2022, INCCRRA will test the payroll reporting database and begin work to create an electronic budget mechanism in preparation for FY23 contract development.

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Community Planning for Expansion

In Q1 2022, facilitated plan development will continue in Cohort 1 communities. In Cohort 2 communities, workshops and plan development will continue as well. In the final community, Aurora, data workshops will get underway.

Activity 6: Monitoring, Evaluation, & Data Use for Continuous Improvement

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality

Healthy Families Initiative (HFI) program staff are continuing to learn Visit Tracker, which replaced Cornerstone as the data collection and reporting system in April 2021. The grant to CPRD was executed with a start date of July 1, 2021. Since that time, CPRD has posted the position, interviewed candidates, and made an offer for the DHS-HFI Research Data Specialist. The candidate accepted the offer and began on September 27, 2021. CPRD's lead MIECHV research specialist trained the HFI Research Data Specialist on the data system. Thirty-two (32) HFI program accounts were set up in Visit Tracker (VT) by November 2, 2021. (Please note that the previous PPR reported that there were 33 accounts–this was a typo and the correct number is 32.) All funded HFI programs had their accounts set up. Data sharing and program account access were established to facilitate CPRD's data support role. On November 2, 2021, HFI programs received their first training focused on the roles for VT account administrators and supervisors, key definitions and identifiers in VT, and a guide to set account preferences.

Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk

During Q4, the NIU team supported: planning of and participation in a technical training related to the Cloud Pak for Data environment; creation of user accounts for the initial set of authorized users of the Cloud Pak for Data environment; and ongoing conversations around integration of various state and local early childhood data sets.

Data Accessibility & Literacy

IECAM transitioned to its new user interface and design. The new web site is much more flexible and built on use of modules. IECAM has retained Pixo, the developer of the site, to handle ongoing maintenance issues. IECAM data staff participated in multiple trainings and workshops with IBM and stakeholders from around the state.

Licensing Process Modernization

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INCCRRA fully implemented the recommendations and changes made by the consulting firm (Envoy) regarding the Zendesk help desk software. The goal of this work is to ensure that the software is set up to provide an efficient platform that will allow for DCLRs to receive priority support as they increase the ways in how they interact with the Gateways Registry. Through this work INCCRRA was able to review and improve the ticket workflow as well as establish SLA priorities and timelines for anything that would be submitted by a DCLR.

Attainment & Achievement Data

As part of the process to improve data quality and capacity to support future analytics, research, and reporting an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) was renewed on January 14, 2021 that covers calendar year 2021. During the fourth quarter of 2021, major activities related to this grant included continued development of the creation of users and an assessment of the feasibility of a data request working group process within the IBM Cloud Pak for Data (CP4D). IBM, in conjunction with DoIT and LDS leadership, hosted a workshop to kick off the Early Childhood Participation Dataset project regarding data governance on December 8, 2021. All engaged agencies and organizations had representation at the workshop. The Data Access and Use Agreement between DHS, ISBE, and GOECD was executed. The report from the Governor's office regarding Public Act 101-0654, the Data Governance and Organization to Support Equity and Racial Justice, was filed.

Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality

During Q4, the NIU team supported: finalization and dissemination of the execution version of the Data Access and Use Agreement (DAUA) enabling creation of the Early Childhood Participation Dataset (ECPDS); finalization and dissemination of the DAUA enabling data collection from Illinois Head Start Association-affiliated Head Start and Early Start grantees; drafting of a policy and related procedures describing the process for requesting data from the ILDS 2.0 Cloud Pak for Data environment, which will house the ECPDS; and wireframing of a revamped ILDS 2.0 website.

2. Problems

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality

The work of this project is in its initial stage since the contract with CPRD did not start until July 1, 2021 and the Research Data Specialist was recently hired in late September

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2021. Project activities began in October 2021. This delay has not caused any deviations from the scope of work

Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk

The delay in executing the Early Childhood Participation Dataset (ECPDS) DAUA has delayed integration of ISBE and DHS data sets and thus creation and initial analysis of the ECPDS.

Data Accessibility & Literacy

Although not directly related to this project, IECAM is waiting for a new data sharing agreement to be negotiated between IDHS and IECAM. This will impact future work in CY2022.

Licensing Process Modernization

There was a delay in obtaining an overview of the tablet-based monitoring software used by DCFS. INCCRRA requested the overview in order to determine if the Gateways Registry may feed into the system in an effort to streamline the process for DCLRs. They also reached out directly to the company that provides the DCFS software but have not yet received a response. There was a budget set aside to work with this company to look at designing a connector between their software and the Gateways Registry. Since they were not able to work on this, INCCRRA focused on updating their data warehouse to be able to support this effort with the new fields related to the workforce.

Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality

The ECPDS DAUA and the Head Start data collection DAUA have yet to be executed. The delays relate to extensive iteration on legal and technical language in the agreements.

Attainment & Achievement Data

Discussions continue regarding an agreement for linking data between ISBE and GOECD, and regarding the automation of the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA) Key process for DHS. Challenges include integrating data from multiple sources and multiple agencies. Support continues to build for data governance within and among the agencies with progress made during the fourth quarter of 2021 adding clarification to the scope of work to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of various users.

3. Significant findings and events

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Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality

While there are no deviations from the scope of work, a major challenge is home visitors/supervisors' vacancies and turnover. About one third of the DHS-HFI local implementing agencies (LIAs) are experiencing this challenge.

Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk

N/A

Data Accessibility & Literacy

IECAM transitioned to its more flexible and custom-developed web site on December 15, 2021.

Attainment & Achievement Data

ISBE tested the ability to connect data to the CP4D system. A training was provided for all agencies. IBM executed a workshop that identified the key questions to be answered through the Early Childhood Participation Dataset and worked with IECAM and NIU on scenarios for data management. Ongoing work continued between DoIT and ISBE on a data management agreement.

Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality

N/A

4. Dissemination activities

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality

N/A

Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk

N/A

Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality

The NIU team disseminated the ECPDS DAUA and the Head Start data collection DAUA for signatures.

Attainment & Achievement Data

Bi-weekly discussions between GOECD, DoIT, Governor's Office, and ISBE have continued in order to develop the project. Additional collaborators in the project have been added to the discussions such as DHS, ISBE, IECAM, and Head Start.

5. Other activities

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Data Accessibility & Literacy

IECAM is preparing the Statement of Work (SOW) for CY2022 related to a three-part plan: 1. CloudPak Connection 2. Data Stewardship and 3. Dashboards.

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Data Linkage (IDHS & ISBE) & Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0 Functionality

In Q1 2022, the following deliverables will be completed: Work with IDHS staff and DataKeeper to develop new reports for the HFI program; train and support IDHS HFI staff in learning the Visit Tracker system so it can be used for monitoring and quality assurance; provide technical assistance, support and training to HFI programs through regular calls with HFI program staff, development and dissemination of training material, and troubleshooting; develop a plan with IDHS Leadership, the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, Northern Illinois University, and the Electronic Data Warehouse to provide HFI data in the formats required for ILDS and other early childhood data initiatives.

Data Modeling & Demographic Crosswalk

The planned activities for Q1 2022 include: Catalog and ingest initial ISBE data elements in the Cloud Pak for Data environment, perform initial data modeling necessary to create, maintain and analyze the ECPDS within the Cloud Pak for Data environment and perform initial descriptive analysis of the ECPDS within the Cloud Pak for Data environment.

Data Accessibility & Literacy

In Q1 2022, IECAM anticipates the approval and funding of the Three-Part Plan related to the data integration project.

Licensing Process Modernization

INCCRRA completed the project during Q4.

Attainment & Achievement Data

The planned activities for Q1 2022 include the following: Complete initial steps to design approach to data integration- Initial steps complete, data integration continues, support agencies in loading data into the ILDS 2.0 standardized analysis platform. In addition, provide technical assistance in the creation of data dictionaries,

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standardization of demographic variables, and data manipulation to support needed analysis.

Early Childhood Participation Database and ILDS 2.0 Functionality

The planned activities for Q1 2022 include the following: Execute the DAUA for the Early Childhood Participation Dataset, execute the DAUA for Head Start data collection and submit for governance approval a set of policies [and associated procedures] describing the data request process for ILDS 2.0.

Bonus Activities

1. Major activities and accomplishments

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

All four participating communities have collectively sent and received over 300 referrals through the IRIS platform in Q4. The communities are in the “cultivate” phase of the implementation process where they will refine their IRIS networks to better meet their community needs; review and generate referral data; and assess their local community impact.

I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice

In Q4, INCCRRA held two half-day Diversity-Informed Tenets workshops on December 1, 2021 and December 10, 2021 for past orientation participants. There were 19 attendees for the December Diversity-Informed Tenets workshops. CEUs were issued as requested. The Reflective Learning Group (RLG) continued with INCCRRA supporting seven facilitators for eight Reflective Learning Groups. The regions represented include Champaign, Downers Grove, Matteson, Oak Park, Springfield, and 3 Statewide (held virtually). A I/ECMHC Quarterly Meeting was held on October 28, 2021, with 43 attendees. INCCRRA continues to process applications for the [I/ECMH Consultant Database](#) and provide technical assistance to individuals needing help with joining the Gateways Registry. More than 96 applications have been received. Work continues around the development of the activity tracking portal for I/ECMH Consultant use as well as requirements around outcomes data tracking.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

- Wabash Area Development (WADI): In Q4, WADI assembled Conscious Discipline curriculum bags for new families that entered Head Start this program year. These families completed pre-surveys and began Conscious Discipline

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instruction with their teachers/home visitors. Returning families began completing post surveys to conclude the Conscious Discipline instruction that began in January 2021. WADI purchased a new Conscious Discipline training for staff that targets Social Emotional Learning in adults. Staff were given a pre-survey to complete and were registered for the training online. The Transition Specialist met with the local Special Education District to update the MOU and establish clear expectations for the upcoming pre-school screenings. A new MOU was created and signed by both parties to improve transition of services.

- United Way – East St. Louis: Activities in Q4 focused on professional development for families and teachers, planning for 2022, and family council development. The Kindergarten Transitions Planning Team met monthly, the Family Council Development Team met biweekly, and the program hosted 6 professional development opportunities that focused on play as early education and social emotional learning – two of the major priorities listed by community members during 2020-2021 planning. In addition, the program offered a presentation regarding the accomplishments in their work thus far during their fall gathering. The following stakeholders were engaged through these activities:
 - 12 educators joined 3 playful learning sessions hosted by PBS
 - 71 individuals participated in a 2-hour self-care workshop co-hosted by Children's Home & Aid's Child Care Resource and Referral Program and Early Learning Partnership (ELP) family liaisons
 - 78 individuals attended a family café focused on social emotional supports during the pandemic
 - 58 individuals attended the ELP fall share out.
- Austin Coming Together (ACT): Austin Coming Together (ACT) and Austin Childcare Providers' Network (ACPN) continue to meet regularly to update and strategize with GOECD as well as with the Core Planning (Advisory) Team to review progress and receive feedback/insights on the child care provider's training and coaching. In Q4, over thirty providers applied to be a part of the curriculum training/coaching initiative. One third of the applicants were selected for this year's cohort. The cohort attended a Meet and Greet in November 2021. The first training occurred in December 2021.
- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): Q4 was the start of the 2021/2022 school year. The Teacher Transitions Team met in October 2021 and November 2021. The October meeting was the first meeting of the year and focused on a review of the work to date and a review of the workplan. The program components remain the same: a cross-system professional learning

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community; three common classroom practices to be adapted across settings; family engagement and empowerment activities. The three common classroom practices the team will focus on for the year remain trauma-informed practices, attendance, and family engagement. The November meeting provided a professional development training that focused on addressing low attendance, which is a concern for all the schools and centers in the community.

2. Problems

I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice

Development on the activity tracking portal for I/ECMH Consultant had to pause temporarily due to the State's need to implement the IDHS Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grants.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

- Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI was unable to host a collaboration meeting with the local school districts in November 2021 as originally planned due to a staffing crisis. Families are still struggling to make home visits/conferences. This has caused a delay in post survey completion; therefore, a final compilation of data will not be available until after the holiday shut down.
- United Way – East St. Louis: As stated in previous reports, burn out is the largest barrier being faced. Families, teachers, and administrators are overwhelmed by the constant changes and have voiced a need to slow some of the activities. In addition, limitations to school physicals due to staff capacity and increased cleaning/disinfecting policies have created barriers for early learning and Kindergarten enrollment.
- Austin Coming Together (ACT): Since working to increase the pool of candidates with the larger ACPN network of providers, the program had enough child care providers in the first cohort of the curriculum training/coaching initiative and was able to maintain momentum. ACPN discovered that some of the selected providers for the training are working with children who are younger than the program initially targeted for the project. Next, there were some delays in the review process of the MOU between ACT, ACPN, and CPS regarding the Kindergarten Transition Initiative. In late December, ACT submitted the draft MOU to CPS for review and feedback.

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- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): COVID-19 continues to pose many challenges for teachers. For many Kindergarten students, this year is their first exposure to any kind of formal schooling. Teachers are feeling intense pressure to bring children up to speed academically. As one teacher said, "they want us to have [the kids] where they are supposed to be...that's impossible...kids are two years behind."

3. Significant findings and events

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

On November 8, 2021, the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research facilitated the first statewide Learning Community for all IRIS networks in Illinois. This included the four home visiting communities as well as those independent of the PDG B-5 grant.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

- Wabash Area Development (WADI): The WADI team lost several employees to jobs outside of the early childhood field. The team has been actively trying to stay in compliance with multiple vaccine/testing mandates implemented by the State and the Office of Head Start. The various guidelines, dates of implementation, and recent changes to Head Start Standards has taken a great deal of time and effort from the WADI team.
- United Way – East St. Louis: Over the last year, United Way-East St. Louis has carried out most of their work with hourly contracted family engagement consultants. During the Family Council planning, the program discovered that consultants wanted more consistency in weekly/monthly hours worked. Through this discussion, the program identified clear, standard hours for several brackets of engagement, which provides families the opportunity to be involved and compensated at the level that makes the most sense for them.
- Austin Coming Together (ACT): ACPN continues to prioritize the planning and implementation of training and coaching for the selected child care providers on curriculum and assessment. The cohort members have expressed concerns on their ability to implement the curriculum and analyze the assessment tool, including members who have been in other trainings regarding Creative Curriculum. They emphasized they struggled with the fidelity of implementing the curriculum and analyzing the data. ACPN discussed the types of strategies

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needed to support the concerns. The Core Planning team recommended, and the program has instituted increasing the monthly stipend to \$50 per hour or \$150 per month. During this quarter, ACT and ACPN transitioned from developing the Action Plan to reviewing the MOU that articulates the partnership between CPS, ACT, and ACPN around Kindergarten transition work. CPS is currently reviewing the MOU with their legal department.

- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): The Transitions program continues to serve as an important opportunity for teachers to align, coordinate, and learn together. In the time of COVID-19, it has been an important forum for support and collaboration.

4. Dissemination activities

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment
N/A

I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice
INCCRRA continues to disseminate all registration information for I/ECMHC professional development opportunities and events through a variety of sources. Promotion and dissemination of information on the I/ECMCH database is ongoing.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

- Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI has worked to obtain signed MOU agreements with all the local school districts and preschools.
- United Way – East St. Louis: N/A
- Austin Coming Together (ACT): N/A
- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): N/A

5. Other activities

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

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- Wabash Area Development (WADI): WADI continued to offer Conscious Discipline instruction to families enrolled in the Head Start/Early Head Start program. Center teachers continued to meet with families by phone at least once a month to provide education and instruction for materials in the parent curriculum bags. Home Visitors continued to provide education on Conscious Discipline during weekly home visits with parents. Staff have continued trainings in Conscious Discipline.
- United Way – East St. Louis: During Q4, the planning team spent a significant amount of time discussing how to measure impact in the coming year. Through these conversations, United Way- East St. Louis has drafted an annual survey for families of all students entering kindergarten. This survey will help the program identify how experiences change from year to year and how that may or may not correlate with Kindergarten readiness outcomes, as outlined in KIDS data.
- Austin Coming Together (ACT): During the Advisory Team meeting, it was shared that the program would like to elevate and professionalize this project by conferring a Kindergarten Transitions Specialist certification process for the providers as a culminating event.
- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): BPI continued to support Pre-K enrollment efforts well into September 2021, ultimately helping to fill over 87% of the slots in the community. That is higher than the city of Chicago's average and higher than most other Chicago community areas.

6. Activities planned for the next reporting period

Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

In Q1 2022, the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research will continue to provide technical assistance support to the four communities. They will also facilitate another statewide IRIS Learning Community. The four communities will continue to connect and refer families through IRIS, increase their network, incorporate more home visiting partners, connect with local early childhood education and care systems, and participate in outreach efforts to families.

I/ECMHC Database, Orientation, and Reflective Practice

In Q1 of 2022, INCCRRA will: maintain Professional Development Coordinator; deliver orientation events (inclusive of FAN); maintain Reflective Learning Groups; provide for State System Communications and Connectors; provide ongoing logistics, supports, and technology for professional development delivery and data tracking; support and

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maintain the statewide I/ECMH Consultant database through the Gateways Registry; implement, support, and maintain the I/ECMH Consultation Activity Tracker database; identify requirements around outcomes data tracking and pilot with a group of consultants; and produce I/ECMHC reports and resources.

Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

- Wabash Area Development (WADI): In Q1 2022, WADI will compile data showing the yearly growth in parent Conscious Discipline instruction. The Transition Support Specialist will create Kindergarten Transition Folders and train staff on how to complete the information families. Staff will continue to work on the Conscious Discipline training SEL In Adults online. WADI will plan for a collaboration meeting to take place in the Spring pending COVID-19 restrictions and staffing statistics.
- United Way – East St. Louis: In Q1 2022, United Way-East St. Louis plans to: Develop Q2 calendars for professional development, community engagement and planning teams, finalize draft of transitions survey and plan for implementation, complete public awareness campaign draft, garner feedback on draft public awareness campaign through formal (focus group) and informal (1-1s) means, identify and onboard a consultant leading Kindergarten readiness development and draft fund development plan for supports outlined in the action plan and strategic plan.
- Austin Coming Together (ACT): In Q1 2022, ACT and ACPN will complete the following deliverables: Work with an evaluator and funder to develop evaluation design and matrices for the program implementation, revise (as needed) the Action Plan that outlines the relationship/partnership between ACT/ACPN and CPS and finalize the MOU to solidify the partnership, collaborate with the Chicago Public Schools Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services around evaluating children in child care programs in the Austin community, continue conducting training, coaching, and pre-assessments with the cohort of child care providers and continue convening bi-weekly core planning meetings.
- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI): In Q1 2022, BPI will continue holding teacher meetings and will plan the first of two-family engagement activities.